

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 ORM-02 DHA-02 IO-13 AID-05  
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00  
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SCA-01  
EA-07 /098 W  
-----091332Z 094719 /50

R 090918Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3951  
INFO AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD  
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN  
AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR PINT SREF LE IK US  
SUBJ: ASSYRIAN REFUGEES

REF: STATE 067781

1. MR. JOHN YONAN OF THE ASSYRIAN UNIVERSAL ALLIANCE (AUA), ACCCOMPANIED BY MR. SAM ANDREWS OF CHICAGO AND TWO OTHER MIDDLE EASTERN REPRESENTATIVES OF HIS ORGANIZATION, CALLED ON AMBASSADOR MAY 4 TO DISCUSS PROBLEMS OF ASSYRIAN REFUGEES IN THE MIDDLE EAST. YONAN SAID THAT IN THE LAST FOUR YEARS THOUSANDS OF ASSYRIAN REFUGEES HAD DEPARTED FROM NORTHEASTERN SYRIA, NORTHERN IRAQ, AND EASTERN TURKEY AS RESULT OF PERSECUTION AND PRESSURE FROM LOCAL POPULATIONS AND HOST GOVERNMENTS. MANY OF THESE REFUGEES HAD GONE TO THE UNITED STATES, CANADA AND AUSTRALIA. YONAN REFERRED SPECIFICALLY TO EMERGENCY OPERATION IN MARCH 1976 WHEN 2700 ASSYRIAN REFUGEES FROM IRAQ WERE MOVED FROM BEIRUT THROUGH ATHENS TO NEW HOMES ABROAD THANKS TO HERCULEAN EFFORTS OF WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES REP, FRANK DE JONGE.

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2. YONAN BRIEFLY REVIEWED CONTACTS HIS ORGANIZATION HAD HAD WITH VARIOUS LEBANESE CHRISTIAN GROUPS AND DEPARTMENT OF STATE. SOME LEBANESE CHRISTIANS, SUCH AS AMIN GEMAYEL AND CAMILLE CHAMOUN, HAD BEEN SYMPATHETIC AND HAD OFFERED FREE LAND FOR ASSYRIAN SETTLEMENTS IN DAMOUR AND DAYR EL QAMAR AREAS. HE SAID THAT AT DEPARTMENT'S SUGGESTION, HIS GROUP HAD

DECIDED TO DISCUSS THE PROBLEM WITH GOL OFFICIALS AND HE AND HIS COMPANIONS HAD JUST COME FROM A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT SARKIS. THEY HAD GIVEN HIM A PAPER OUTLINING THEIR PLANS AND DISCUSSED IT WITH HIM. THEIR IDEA WAS TO BRING IN SMALL GROUPS OF REFUGEES WHO COULD BE SETTLED IN BOTH URBAN AND RURAL AREAS. YONAN SAID SARKIS HAD LISTENED SYMPATHETICALLY, ASKED A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS AND SAID HE WOULD STUDY THE MATTER CAREFULLY AND BE BACK IN TOUCH WITH THEM. IF GOL REPLY WAS FAVORABLE, YONAN SAID, HIS GROUP WOULD BE SEEKING FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR RESETTLEMENT OF ASSYRIAN REFUGEES IN LEBANON FROM THE OFFICE OF THE COORDINATOR FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS IN THE DEPARTMENT AS WELL AS FROM PRIVATE SOURCES.

3. IN ADDITION TO APPROXIMATELY 200,000 ASSYRIANS NOW IN U.S., YONAN SAID THAT HIS PEOPLE WERE NOW DISTRIBUTED AS FOLLOWS (ALL FIGURES APPROXIMATE): IRAQ, ONE MILLION; LEBANON, 100,000; SYRIA, 100,000; TURKEY, 20,000; IRAN, 70,000; USSR, 200,000; AUSTRALIA, 15,000; AND CANADA, 15,000.

4. IN RESPONSE TO YONAN'S REQUEST FOR ADVICE, AMBASSADOR SAID THAT LEBANON TODAY IS A TROUBLED COUNTRY. HE ADVISED YONAN THAT VARIOUS GROUPS IN LEBANON MIGHT SEEK TO USE HIS REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM FOR THEIR OWN PURPOSES AND HE SHOULD THEREFORE BE VERY CAUTIOUS. AMBASSADOR POINTED OUT, FOR EXAMPLE, THAT ASSYRIAN SETTLEMENTS IN DAMOUR AND

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DAYR EL QAMAR IN THE SHUF WOULD PUT THEM IN THE AREA WHERE DRUZE HAD MURDERED APPROXIMATELY 100 CHRISTIANS IN REACTION TO KAMAL JUNBLATT'S ASSASSINATION. EVEN THOUGH MARONITES WERE REPORTEDLY OFFERING FREE LAND FOR RESETTLEMENT, AMBASSADOR ADVISED YONAN THAT HE AND HIS GROUP EXAMINE THIS PROPOSITION VERY CLOSELY BEFORE COMMITTING THEMSELVES TO IT. YONAN AGREED THAT SITUATION IN LEBANON WAS COMPLEX AND THERE WAS NO GUARANTEE THAT ASSYRIANS WOULD BE SAFE HERE. HE AND HIS GROUP NEVERTHELESS FELT THAT ASSYRIANS WOULD HAVE A BETTER CHANCE TO MAKE A LIFE FOR THEMSELVES IN LEBANON THAN ELSEWHERE IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
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